ETHICAL RELIGION

BY
M. K. GANDHI

NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD-14

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

Ethical Religion is the English paraphrase of the Gujarati rendering by Mahatma Gandhi published in *Indian Opinion* in its issues from 5-1-1907 to 23-2-1907. The original book, *Ethical Religion* was written by William MacIntyre Salter, the founder of the society for Ethical Culture, Chicago and published in America in March 1889 and later in England in 1905. In the Gujarati series Gandhiji summarized only eight of the fifteen chapters. The English rendering of the original Gujarati is reproduced from *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. VI.

We hope the publication of *Ethical Religion* as a separate booklet will be appreciated by the reader.

23-12-'68

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ETHICAL RELIGION

TO THE READER

I would like to say to the diligent reader of my writings and to others who are interested in them that I am not at all concerned with appearing to be consistent. In my search after Truth I have discarded many ideas and learnt many new things. Old as I am in age, I have no feeling that I have ceased to grow inwardly or that my growth will stop at the dissolution of the flesh. What I am concerned with is my readiness to obey the call of Truth, my God, from moment to moment, and, therefore, when anybody finds any inconsistency between any two writings of mine, if he has still faith in my sanity, he would do well to choose the later of the two on the same subject.

M. K. Gandhi

Harijan, 29-4-'33, p. 2

INTRODUCTION

Hypocrisy has nowadays increased in the world. Whatever a man's religion, he thinks only of its outward form and fails in his real duty. In our crazy pursuit of wealth, we seldom think of the harm we cause, or are likely to cause, to others. Women in Europe do not hesitate in the least to wear soft [kid] gloves even though these are made by killing young and tender animals. It is known the world over how Mr. Rockefeller, said to be the richest man in the world, violated many rules of morality in amassing his fortune. It is because such conditions prevail around them that many people in Europe and America have turned against religion. They argue that, if any religion worth the name existed in the world, the inordinate wickedness that is rampant all round would not be there. This is a mistaken view. As it is common for a workman to quarrel with his tools and not try to look for his own faults, so, instead of thinking of the wickedness in themselves, men brand religion itself as humbug and go on acting and living as they please.

Observing this trend and fearing that, if all religions are destroyed, a great calamity may befall the world and people may forsake the moral path altogether, many Americans and Europeans have come forward to try, in a variety of ways, to bring the people back to that path.

A Society[1] has been founded which has shown, after an investigation of all religions, that not only

[1] The Society for Ethical Culture, Chicago.

do all of them teach morality but they are based for the most part on ethical principles; that it is one's duty to obey the laws of ethics whether or not one professes a religion; and that men who would not obey them could do no good either to themselves or to others, in this world or the next. The object of these societies is to influence those who have been led to look down upon all religions because of the prevailing hypocrisy. They find out the fundamentals of all religions, discuss and write about the ethical principles common to them and live up to them. This creed they call Ethical Religion. It is not among the aims of these societies to criticize any religion. Men professing all religions can, and do, join these societies. The advantage of such a society is that members adhere to their own faith more strictly and pay greater attention to its moral teaching. They firmly believe that man ought to abide by the laws of morality and that if he does not, it will mean an end to all order in the world and ultimate destruction.

Mr. Salter, a learned American, has published a book on the subject, which is excellent. Though it does not deal with any religion as such, it contains teachings of universal application. We shall publish the substance of these teachings every week. All that needs to be said about the author is that he practises whatever he advises others to do. We would only appeal to the reader to try to live up to those moral precepts that appeal to him. Then only may we regard our efforts as having been fruitful.

CHAPTER I

BEGINNING

It is the moral nature of man by which he rises to good and noble thoughts. The different sciences show us the world as it is. Ethics tells us what it ought to be. It enables man to know how he should act. Man has two windows to his mind: through one he can see his own self as it is; through the other, he can see what it ought to be. It is our task to analyse and explore the body, the brain and the mind of man separately; but if we stop here, we derive no benefit despite our scientific knowledge. It is necessary to know about the evil effects of injustice, wickedness, vanity and the like, and the disaster they spell where the three are found together. And mere knowledge is not enough, it should be followed by appropriate action. An ethical idea is like an architect's plan. The plan shows how the building should be constructed; but it becomes useless if the building is not raised accordingly. Similarly, an ethical idea is useless so long as it is not followed by suitable action. There are many who memorize moral precepts and preach sermons, but they neither practise them nor do they mean to do so. There are some who believe that moral principles are not intended to be practised in this world; they are meant for the other world—the world which lies beyond death. A great thinker has said, "If you wish to attain perfection, you must begin from this very day to live according to the laws of morality at any cost." We need not be scared away by such thoughts; on the contrary we should

be glad to live up to them, considering our responsibility in the matter. "Certainly, cousin," said the gallant Earl of Pembroke, on coming up to the Earl of Derby before Aubercoche and finding the battle already won, "you have neither been courteous nor behaved honourably to fight my enemies without waiting for me, seeing that you had sent for me". Only when there is such readiness to accept moral responsibility will men tread the path of virtue.

God is omnipotent, He is perfect. There are no limits to His mercy, to His goodness and to His justice. If this is so, how can we, His bond slaves, stray at all from the moral path? It is no fault of the ethical principles if one following them should fail. However, those committing a breach of morality have only themselves to blame.

In the path of morality there is no such thing as reward for moral behaviour. If a man does some good deed, he does not do it to win applause, he does it because he must. For him doing good is but a higher kind of food, if one may compare food and goodness. And if someone should give him an opportunity to do a good deed, he would feel grateful just as a starving man would be grateful to the giver of food and bless him.

This ethical religion, of which we have spoken, does not mean the cultivation of gentlemanliness. It does mean that we should become a little more diligent, a little better educated, a little cleaner and neater, etc. All this is no doubt included in it, but it touches only the fringe of ethical religion. Many more things have to be done by man if he would walk along this path; and he has to do them as a matter

of duty, knowing them to be a part of his nature, not for gaining any worldly benefit.

CHAPTER II

IDEAL MORALITY

The current views of morality are not of a very high order. Some believe that morality is not something quite essential. Others think that there is no relation between religion and morality. But an examination of the world's religions shows that, without morality, religion cannot subsist. True morality covers religion for the most part. Anyone who observes the laws of morality for their own sake and not for any selfish end can be regarded as religious. There are men in Russia who dedicate their lives to the good of their country. Such men are truly moral. A man like Jeremy Bentham, who discovered many good principles for English legislation, tried very hard to spread education among the English and took a prominent part in improving the condition of prisoners, may be regarded as truly moral.

Besides, it is a rule of ideal morality that it is not enough to follow the trodden path. We ought to follow the path which we know to be true, whether it is familiar or unfamiliar to us. In other words, when we know a particular path to be the right one, we should set out on it without fear. We can progress only if we observe the laws of morality in this way. That is why true morality, true civilization and true progress are always to be found together.

If we examine our desires, we shall see that we do not wish for what we have already. We always

value more that which we do not have. But desires are of two kinds: one is the pursuit of mere self-interest. To attempt to fulfil this kind of desire is immoral. The other impels us constantly to improve ourselves and to do good to others. We should never become overweening with any amount of good that we may do. It is not for us to evaluate it, but rather should we have perpetual longing to become better and do more good. True morality consists in our effort to realize such longing.

If we have no home or family of our own, that is nothing to be ashamed of. But if we have a home and abuse it, or own a business and practise fraud, we stray from the path of morality. Morality consists in doing what we ought to do. We can prove the need of morality through a few illustrations. Destruction has been the lot of peoples or families in which the seeds of immorality, such as disunity and untruth, were found. To take an example from trade and business, we do not come across a single person who will say that truth should not be followed. The effect of justice and goodness is not felt from outside; these qualities inhere in us. Four hundred years ago, much injustice and untruth prevailed in Europe, so that people could not rest in peace even for a moment. The cause of this state of affairs was that people had no morality. If we take out the essence of all moral laws, we shall find that the attempt to do good to mankind is the highest morality. If we open the treasure-house of morality with this key, we shall find in it all the other principles.

At the end of each of these articles, we print select poems bearing on morality from Gujarati or Urdu poets in the hope that all our readers will benefit from

them and will also commit them to memory. We begin with an extract[1] from Mr. Malbari's[2] book, *Admi Ane Teni Duniya.*

CHAPTER III

WHAT IS MORAL ACTION?

When can it be said that a particular action is moral? In asking this question, the intention is not to contrast moral with immoral actions, but to consider many of our everyday actions against which nothing can be said from the conventional standpoint and which some regard as moral. Most of our actions are probably non-moral; they do not necessarily involve morality. For the most part we act according to the prevailing conventions. Such conventional behaviour is often necessary. If no such rules are observed, anarchy would be the result, and society—social intercourse—would come to an end. Still the mere observance of custom and usage cannot properly be called morality.

A moral act must be our own act: it must spring from our own will. If we act mechanically, there is no moral content in our act. Such action would be moral, if we think it proper to act like a machine and do so. For in doing so, we use our discrimination. We should bear in mind the distinction between acting mechanically and acting intentionally. It may be moral of a king to pardon a culprit. But the messenger bearing the order of pardon plays only a mechanical

[1] Not reproduced here.

[2] B. M. Malbari, Gujarati poet and social reformer. The title of the book is *Man and His World.*

part in the king's moral act. But if the messenger were to bear the king's order, considering it to be his duty, his action would be a moral one. How can a man understand morality who does not use his own intelligence and power of thought, but lets himself be swept along like a log of wood by a current? Sometimes a man defies convention and acts on his own with a view to [doing] absolute good. Such a great hero was Wendell Phillips[1]. Addressing an assembly of people, he once said, "Till you learn to form your own opinions and express them, I do not care much what you think of me." Thus when we all care only for what our conscience says, then alone can we be regarded to have stepped on to the moral road. We shall not reach this stage, as long as we do not believe —and experience the belief—that God within us, the God of all, is the ever present witness to all our acts.

It is not enough that an act done by us is in itself good; it should have been done with the intention to do good. That is to say, whether an act is moral or otherwise depends upon the intention of the doer. Two men may have done exactly the same thing; but the act of one may be moral, and that of the other the contrary. Take, for instance, a man who out of great pity feeds the poor and another who does the same, but with the motive of winning prestige or with some such selfish end. Though the action is the same, the act of the one is moral and that of the other non-moral. The reader here ought to remember the distinction between the two words, non-moral and immoral. It may be that we do not always see good results flowing from a moral act.

[1] (1811-84); American orator, social reformer and abolitionist.

While thinking of morality, all that we need to see is that the act is good and is done with a good intention. The result of an action is not within our control. God alone is the giver of fruit. Historians have called Emperor Alexander "great". Wherever he went [in the course of his conquests,] he took the Greek language and Greek culture, arts and manners, and today we enjoy the benefits of Greek civilization. But the intention of Alexander behind all this was only conquest and renown. Who can therefore say that his actions were moral? It was all right that he was termed "great", but moral he cannot be called.

These reflections prove that it is not enough for a moral act to have been done with a good intention, but it should have been done without compulsion. There is no morality whatever in my act, if I rise early out of the fear that, if I am late for my office, I may lose my situation. Similarly there is no morality in my living a simple and unpretentious life if I have not the means to live otherwise. But plain, simple living would be moral if, though wealthy, I think of all the want and misery in the world about me—and feel that I ought to live a plain, simple life and not one of ease and luxury. Likewise it is only selfish, and not moral, of an employer to sympathize with his employees or to pay them higher wages lest they leave him. It would be moral if the employer wished well of them and treated them kindly realizing how he owed his prosperity to them. This means that for an act to be moral it has to be free from fear and compulsion. When the peasants rose in revolt and with bloodshot eyes went to King Richard II of England demanding their rights, he granted them the rights under his

own seal and signature. But when the danger was over, he forced them to surrender the letters. It would be a mistake for anyone to say that King Richard's first act was moral and the second immoral. For his first act was done only out of fear and had not an iota of morality about it.

Just as a moral action should be free from fear or compulsion so should there be no self-interest behind it. This is not to say that actions prompted by self-interest are all worthless, but only that to call them moral would detract from the [dignity of the] moral idea. That honesty cannot long endure which is practised in the belief that it is the best policy. As Shakespeare says, love born out of the profit motive is no love.[1]

Just as an action prompted by the motive of material gain here on earth is non-moral, so also another done for considerations of comfort and personal happiness in another world is non-moral. That action is moral which is done only for the sake of doing good. A great Christian, St. Francsis Xavier, passionately prayed that his mind might always remain pure.[2] For him devotion to God was not for

1 "Love is not love,
When it is mingled with respects that stand
Aloof from the entire point."

2 "Then why, O blessed Jesus Christ,
Shall I not love thee well?
Not for the sake of winning heaven,
Or of escaping hell;
Not with the hope of gaining aught,
Not seeking a reward—
But as thyself hast loved me,
O everlasting Lord!"

enjoying a higher seat after death. He prayed because it was man's duty to pray. The great Saint Theresa wished to have a torch in her right hand and a vessel of water in her left, so that with the one she might burn the glories of heaven and with the other extinguish the fires of hell, and men might learn to serve God from love alone—without fear of hell and without temptation of heavenly bliss. To preserve morality thus demands a brave man prepared to face even death. It is cowardice to be true to friends and to break faith with enemies. Those who do good out of fear and haltingly have no moral virtue. Henry Clay, known for his kindliness, sacrificed his convictions to his ambition. Daniel Webster[1], for all his great intellect and his sense of the heroic and the sublime, once sold his intellectual integrity for a price. By a single mean act he wiped out all his good deeds. This shows how difficult it is to judge the morality of a man's action because we cannot penetrate the depths of his mind. We have also the answer to the question raised at the outset in this chapter: what is a moral action? Incidentally, we also saw which kind of men could live up to that morality.[2]

[1] (1782-1852); American statesman and lawyer; his "biographers insist that he was never personally dishonest".

—*Encyclopædia Britannica*

[2] Here follows a poem from *Kavyadohan*, an anthology of Gujarati verse, but it is not reproduced in this book.

CHAPTER IV

IS THERE A HIGHER LAW?

We constantly pronounce judgments upon the value of actions. Some actions satisfy us and others do not. Whether a certain act is good or bad does not depend upon whether it is beneficial or harmful to us. In judging it, we adopt quite a different standard. We have in our minds certain ideas and on the basis of those we judge the acts of others. Whether any wrong done by one to another affects us or not, we do feel it to be wrong. Sometimes, we have a trace of sympathy for the wrong-doer; but despite that sympathy, we feel no hesitation at all in pronouncing his act to be wrong. It may be that at times our judgment is found to be mistaken. We cannot always fathom a man's motives, and may thus judge him wrongly. Nevertheless, we find no difficulty in judging an act in so far as the intention is known. Even if our personal interests are sometimes served by wrong actions, we do feel inwardly that they are wrong.

Thus it is established that the rightness or wrongness of an act does not depend upon a man's self-interest. Nor does it depend upon his wishes. There is a difference between morality and sympathy. Out of sympathy for the child we wish to give it a certain thing, but if the thing is harmful to the child, we hold it immoral to give it. It is doubtless good to show sympathy but, unrestricted by moral considerations, it turns into poison.

We see also that moral laws are immutable. Opinions change, but not morality. When our eyes

are open, we see the sun; when they are closed, it is not seen. The change here has been in our sense of sight, not in the fact of the sun's existence. The same holds true of moral laws. It is probable that in a state of ignorance we do not know what is moral; but once the eye of knowledge is opened, there is no difficulty in knowing it. Men rarely care to see single-mindedly the right or wrong of things; often prompted by personal considerations, they mistakenly describe the immoral as moral. The time is yet to come when men, freeing themselves from self-regarding considerations, will concentrate their attention on the ideas of morality alone. Moral culture is still in its mere infancy; it is as science was before the birth of a Bacon or a Darwin. Men were eager to know what the truth was. Instead of inquiring into morality, they have been hitherto engaged in discovering laws of nature — the laws of the earth's motion, etc. Where do we find the disinterested student of morality, patient and painstaking, who, setting aside his earlier superstitious notions, devotes his life to seeking only the ideal good? When men become as eager to explore the world of moral ideas as they are now to explore the realms of nature, we shall be able to bring together the various conceptions of morality. It is unlikely that, on ideas of morality, there will be the same divergence of opinion as exists among men on matters of science. However, we may not for a time arrive at unanimity of opinion regarding moral laws. This does not, however, mean that it is impossible to distinguish between right and wrong.

We thus see that, independent of and apart from men's wishes and opinions, there is something like a moral standard which we may call moral law. If

there are laws of the State, why may not there be a moral law too? It does not matter if that law is not committed to writing by man, and indeed it need not be. If we grant or hold that the moral law exists, it is incumbent on us to obey it, just as we ought to obey the law of the State. A moral law is distinct from and better than the laws of the State or those of business. One may ask, "How does it matter if I do not obey the laws of business and remain poor? Or if I disobey the laws of the State and incur the ruler's displeasure?" But it will never do—either for me or anyone else—to say, "What does it matter whether I tell a lie or tell the truth?"

There is thus a great difference between moral laws and temporal laws. For morality dwells in our hearts. Even a man practising immorality would admit that he has been immoral. A wrong can never become right. Even where a people is vile, though men may not observe the moral law, they would make a pretence of doing so; they thus are obliged to admit that moral laws ought to be observed. Such is the greatness of morality. It cares not for custom nor for public opinion. To a moral man, public opinion or custom is binding only so long as it is in harmony with the moral law.

Where does this moral law come from? This law is not laid down by the State, for different laws are found in different States. Many men were opposed to the morality which Socrates observed in his day. Even so the world admits that the morality he observed has remained, and shall remain, morality for ever. Robert Browning says, 'If ever Satan proclaimed the law of hatred and untruth in the world, even then justice, goodness and truth will continue to be

divine.'[1] One may conclude from this that the moral law is supreme and divine.

Such a law no people or individual can violate to the end of time. As has been said, even as the dangerous storm ultimately passes, immoral men must meet their destruction.[2]

No sooner did the cup of sin in Assyria and Babylon become full than it broke. When Rome trod the path of immorality, none of her great men could save her. The ancient Greeks were an accomplished people, still all their art and philosophy could not continue in their immorality for long. The French Revolution was but an insurrection against immorality. The same was the case with America. The good Wendell Phillips used to say that immorality even if enthroned will not endure. This mysterious moral law brings prosperity to the man who observes it: it sustains the family that obeys it, and the community which lives by it ever flourishes. Freedom, peace and happiness are the lot of the nation that lets itself be ruled by this highest law.[3]

[1] ...justice, good, and truth were still
Divine, if, by some demon's will,
Hatred and wrong had been proclaimed
Law through the worlds, and right misnamed.
Christmas Eve, XVII.

[2] As the whirlwind passeth, so is the wicked no more; but the righteous is an everlasting foundation. *Proverbs*, X. 25.

[3] Here follows a poem from *Kavyadohan*.

CHAPTER V

MORALITY AS A RELIGION

The subject of this chapter may strike one as strange. The common idea is that morality and religion are distinct things; still this chapter seeks to consider morality as a religion. Some readers may think the writer guilty of confusion. That reproach may come from two sides—from those who regard religion as more than morality, and from others who think that, where there is morality, there is no need for religion. Yet the author's intention is to show their close relationship. The societies spreading ethical religion or religious ethics believe in religion through morality.

The common idea, it may be admitted, is that there may be morality without religion and religion without morality. One comes across many men of immoral conduct who claim to be religious in spite of the sinful acts they commit. On the other hand, there are moral men like the late Mr. Bradlaugh, who are proud to call themselves atheists and would run away from the name of religion. Those who hold either of these views are mistaken. Those who hold the first view are not only mistaken, but also dangerous as they practise immorality under the guise of religion. In this chapter, therefore, we shall show that, considered intellectually and scientifically, religion and morality are united and should be so united.

Morality was in the beginning simply the customary conduct of a community, settled ways of acting that men living together naturally fell into. By a

natural process the good customs tended to survive and the bad ones to die out, since, if the bad ones did not die out, they would weaken the community and lead to its extinction. Even today we see this process at work. It is neither morality nor religion if people observe good customs more or less unthinkingly. However, most of what passes for morality in the world today consists, as pointed out above, of good customs.

Moreover, men often have a merely superficial idea of religion. Sometimes men believe in religion only as a means to ward off dangers that threaten them. It would be a mistake to dignify actions as religious where they are performed out of a love that springs from fear.

But at long last a time does come when men begin to tread the path of morality consciously, deliberately with a determined will, regardless of gain or loss, of life or death, without turning to look back, ready to sacrifice themselves. Then can they be said to have been permeated with true morality.

How can such morality subsist except with the support of religion? One tells oneself, "If by doing a little harm to another, I can secure my personal interest, why should I not do that little harm?" The profit derived from doing harm is no profit, but a positive loss [to the doer]. How shall this unpalatable dose go down one's throat? Ostensibly in Germany's interest, Bismarck perpetrated dreadful deeds. Where then was his education? Where did those maxims of morality disappear which, at other times, he used to mouth before schoolchildren? Obviously, a reply to all these questions can be given. The reason why

he could not keep up his morality in the face of these difficulties was that his morality was not grounded in religion. So long as the seed of morality is not watered by religion, it cannot sprout. Without water it withers and ultimately perishes. Thus it will be seen that true or ideal morality ought to include true religion. To put the same thought differently, morality cannot be observed without religion. That is to say, morality should be observed as a religion.

Furthermore, it is seen that the rules of morality, laid down in the world's great religions, are largely the same. The founders of the religions have also explained that morality is the basis of religion. If a foundation is removed, the superstructure falls to the ground; similarly if morality is destroyed, religion which is built on it comes crashing down.

The author adds that there is nothing wrong in calling morality a religion. Dr. Coit in his prayer says, "I shall have no other God except righteousness." On reflection, we shall realize that God will not help us and answer our impassioned prayer for help, if we utter His name, while having a dagger concealed under our arm. Let us take two men, one who believes in the existence of God, yet breaks all His Commandments; and another who, though not acknowledging God by name, worships Him through his deeds and obeys His laws, recognizing in the divine laws, their Maker. Which of the two men shall we call a man of religion and morality? Without a moment's thought, one would emphatically reply that the second man alone is to be considered religious and moral.[1]

[1] Here follows a poem by Behramji Malbari which has not been translated.

CHAPTER VI

RELIGIOUS MORALITY OR MORAL RELIGION

Gandhiji wrote the following prefatory note to this Chapter under the caption of "Darwin's Views on Ethics".

[Before summarizing this Chapter, it is necessary to give an account first of Darwin himself. Darwin was a great Englishman of the last century who made great scientific discoveries. His memory and his power of observation were amazing. He has written some books which deserve to be read and pondered. With a mass of evidence and arguments, he has shown how man came into being; how he has evolved from a particular kind of monkey. After a large number of experiments and much sifting of evidence, he realized that there was not much difference between the anatomy of man and that of the ape. Whether this conclusion is correct or not has not much to do with ethics. Besides this, Darwin has also shown how ideas of morality affect mankind. And as many scholars have faith in Darwin's writings, our author has dealt with his views in Chapter VI.]

It is noble voluntarily to do what is good and right. The true sign of man's nobility is the fact that, instead of being driven about like a cloud before the wind, he stands firm and can do, and in fact does, what he deems proper.

Nevertheless, we ought to know the direction in which our environment disposes our instincts. We know that we are not in every way masters of our own

life; there are conditions outside of us to which we have to adjust ourselves. For instance, in a country where Himalayan cold prevails, we have to put on adequate clothing, whether we like it or not, in order to keep the body warm. That is, we have to act with prudence.

The question now arises: does the influence of environment lead us to be moral? Or can it be that the forces that surround us are indifferent to morality?

At this point it becomes necessary to consider Darwin's views. Though Darwin did not write as a moral philosopher, he has shown how close the connection is between morality and environment. Those who think that morality is unimportant and that physical strength and mental capacity are the only things that matter should read Darwin. According to him, there is an instinct of self-preservation in men as in other creatures. He also says that those who survive the struggle for existence may be regarded as successful, that is, those who are unfit tend to extinction, but that the issue of the struggle does not depend on mere physical force.

Comparing man with the bear or the buffalo, we find that, in physical strength, the bear and the buffalo are superior to him; in a tussle he will surely be worsted. Nonetheless he is their superior by virtue of his intelligence. Similarly we can compare different races of men. In war it is not the side with the largest numbers or with the hardiest soldiers that wins, but the side with the ablest generals and the best strategy, though its soldiers may be fewer or less hardy. In these examples we see the superiority of intelligence.

But Darwin shows further that moral strength is even superior to physical and intellectual strength; and we can see in various ways that a man who has moral qualities lasts longer than one who is devoid of them. Some hold that Darwin taught that strength is enough; that is, those who are physically strong ultimately survive. Superficial thinkers may believe that morality is of no use. But this is not Darwin's view at all. We find from the evidence of the early history of man that races without morality have completely disappeared. The people of Sodom and Gomorrah were extremely immoral and they are now therefore completely extinct. We can see even today how races without morality are steadily declining.

Let us now take some simple illustrations and see how at least common morality is necessary for sustaining the human race. A peaceful disposition is one element of morality. At first sight it may appear that people with a violent disposition rise in life; but a little reflection will show that, when the sword of violence falls, it may be on one's own neck. Freedom from bad habits forms another element of morality. Statistics have proved that, at the age of thirty, intemperate persons in England are not likely to live beyond another thirteen or fourteen years, while the teetotaller's expectation of life is seventy years. Yet another element of morality is chastity. Darwin has shown that profligate persons die early. They have no children, or if they have any, they are weak. The profligate become feeble of mind, and in course of time look like idiots.

If we consider the morals of various communities, we find the same state of affairs. Among the Andaman islanders the husband looks after his wife only

until their child is weaned and begins to move about, and he then abandons her. That is, they do not have the quality of altruism, and utter selfishness prevails. The result is that the race is gradually dying out. Darwin shows that the altruistic instinct is present, to some extent, even in animals: timid birds display strength in defending their young. This shows that, if there had been no selflessness among animals, we should have in the world scarcely any life other than grass and poisonous flora. The main distinction between man and other animals is that man is more selfless than the animals. He has sacrificed his life for others in proportion to his strength, that is, for his offspring, for his family, his community and his country.

Darwin clearly shows that moral strength is supreme. The ancient Greeks had greater intelligence than the Europeans of today, but when the former gave up morality, their intelligence became their enemy, and no trace of them remains today. Nations are sustained neither by wealth nor by armies, but by righteousness alone. It is the duty of man to bear this truth in mind and practise altruism, which is the highest form of morality.

CHAPTER VII
SOCIAL IDEAL

It is sometimes said that all morality involves social relations. This is well said; for instance, if the judge has a proper sense of justice, men who go to court obtain satisfaction. Similarly love, kindness, generosity and other qualities can be manifested only

in relation to others. The force of loyalty can be demonstrated only in our relations with one another. Of patriotism, nothing need be said. Truly speaking, there is no aspect of morality the benefit of which accrues to the practitioner alone. Sometimes it is said that truthfulness and other virtues have nothing to do with the other person and are entirely personal. But we must admit that by telling the truth we prevent harm to another, just as by telling a lie and deceiving a person we do him an injury.

In the same way, when a man disapproves of certain laws or customs and withdraws from society, even then his acts affect society. Such a man lives in a world of ideals. He does not worry that the world of his ideals is not yet born. For him the mere thought that the prevailing standard is not good enough is sufficient to impel him to resist it. He will constantly try to change other people's way of life to his own. This is how prophets have caused the world's wheels to change their course.

So long as man remains selfish and does not care for the happiness of others, he is no better than an animal and perhaps worse. His superiority to the animal is seen only when we find him caring for his family. He is still more human, that is, much higher than the animal, when he extends his concept of the family to include his country or community as well. He climbs still higher in the scale when he comes to regard the human race as his family. A man is an animal or imperfect [as a human being] to the extent that he falls behind in his service to humanity. If I feel my wife's injury or that of my community, yet have no sympathy for anyone outside the circle, it is clear that I do not have any feeling for

humanity as such; but I have, simply out of selfishness or a sense of discrimination, a certain feeling for my wife, my children or the community which I hold as my own.

That is to say, we have neither practised nor known ethical religion so long as we do not feel sympathy for every human being. Now we know that the higher morality must be comprehensive; it must embrace all men. Considering our relation to mankind, every man has a claim over us, as it is our duty always to serve him. We should act on the assumption that we have no claim on others. He is merely ignorant who would here argue that the man acting in this manner will be trampled in the world's scramble. For it is a universal experience that God always saves the man who whole-heartedly devotes himself the service of others.

According to this moral standard all men are equal. This is not to be interpreted to mean equality of position and function for all. It only means that, if I hold a high place, I also have the ability to shoulder its duties and responsibilities. I should not therefore lose my head and believe that men with smaller responsibilities are my inferiors. Equality depends on the state of our mind, and until our mind reaches that state, we shall remain backward.

According to this moral standard no nation can rule another for selfish ends. It is immoral of the American people to reduce the aborigines to an inferior status and run the government. A civilized race coming into contact with a savage one owes it to the latter to raise it to its own level. The same standard rules that the king is the servant and not the master of his people and that the officers are not

there to enjoy power but to make the people happy. If the people in a democratic State are selfish, that State comes to no good.

Moreover, according to this law, the stronger members of a State or community have to protect, not oppress, the weaker ones. Under such a government there can be no starvation; nor can there be excessive accumulation of riches; for we can never be happy while we see our neighbours languishing in misery. The man following this high moral standard will never amass wealth. He who would be moral need not be scared away by the thought that few follow this ideal morality; for he is master of his morality, not of its results. He will be considered guilty if he does not practise morality; but nobody will find fault with him if his immoral behaviour has no consequences for society.

CHAPTER VIII

PERSONAL MORALITY

'I am responsible for this,' or 'This is my duty': this is a moving and wonderful thought. A mysterious, resounding voice seems to say, 'To thee, individually, O man, is given this task. Whether defeat or victory, both belong to thee. Thou art what no one else in the world is, for nowhere has nature created two similar objects. Thou hast a duty which no one else in the world can do, and if thou dost not do it that loss will stand debited to thee in the world's balance-sheet.'

'What is that duty I owe to myself?' Someone may quote the verse:

Call not man God, for man is not God,
Yet man is not distinct from God's glory,

and answer, 'My duty is to rest secure in the belief that I am a ray of God's light.' Another may answer that the duty is to have sympathy and fraternal regard for others. A third may answer that it is to revere parents, care for one's wife and children, and acquit oneself well with brother, sister or friend. Alongside of all these virtues, it is also a part of my duty to respect myself even as I respect others. As long as I do not understand myself, how shall I understand others? And how shall I respect one whom I do not know? Many hold the view that the obligation of proper conduct arises [only] in relation to others and that, in the absence of contact with others, one may do just as one pleases. He who holds this view does not know what he says. In this world none can, with impunity, act as he pleases.

Let us now see what our duty is to ourselves. Let us take, first, our private habits which are unknown to all but ourselves. We are responsible for them since they affect our character; but this is not all. We are responsible for them also because they affect others. Every person ought to control his own impulses, and keep his soul as well as body clean. 'Tell me,' says a great man, 'what a man's private habits are and I shall tell you what he is or will be.' We should therefore control all our appetites, so that we do not drink or eat to excess. Else we shall lose our strength and our good name. Worldly success never comes to him who does not abstain from sensual pleasures and does not thus save his body, mind, intellect and soul.

Arguing along these lines and keeping one's instincts pure, one should further consider how to put them to use. One ought to have a fixed aim in life. If we do not discover our life's purpose, and keep steadily to the course, we shall be swept along like a rudderless ship on the high seas; we shall falter on the [moral] path. Man's highest duty in life is to serve mankind and take his share in bettering its condition. This is true worship—true prayer. He is a godly man who does God's work. Hypocrites and cheats going about invoking God's name are legion. Because a parrot utters the name of God, no one would call it godly. Contribution to an ideal order of human life is something everyone can aim at. With this aim in view the mother may legitimately rear her child, the lawyer may pursue his profession, the merchant may carry on his business or trade and the working man may labour. A person with that fixed aim would never deviate from the path of morality, for if he did, he could not fulfil his aim of uplifting mankind.

Let us consider the matter in some detail. We ought constantly to examine whether our way of life tends to improve human life or to worsen it. Thus the merchant should ask himself whether, in transacting a business, he is cheating himself or another. The lawyer and the physician, acting according to this standard, will give more thought to their client or patient than to their fees. The mother in rearing her child would proceed very cautiously lest she should spoil the child out of misguided love or some selfish interest. The worker too would be guided by these considerations and do his duty. The result of all this would be that, if the worker fulfils his function in

conformity with the moral ideal, he would be deemed better and higher than the wealthy merchant, physician or lawyer who lives without any discipline. The worker would be the true coin and those selfish men, even though more intelligent or wealthy, would be counterfeit. This further shows that any man, whatever his place in life, has the power to fulfil this aim. A man's value depends upon his way of life, not his status. One's way of life is not to be judged by one's visible outward actions, but by one's inner leanings. For instance, if of two men, one gives a dollar to a poor person to rid himself of his presence and the other half a dollar but with love and out of compassion for the man, obviously, the one who gave half a dollar is truly moral, while the other who gave a dollar, the sinner.

To sum up, he alone is religious, he alone is happy and he alone is wealthy, who is sincere in himself, bears no malice, exploits no one and always acts with a pure mind. Such men alone can serve mankind. How can a damp matchstick kindle a log of wood? How can a man who does not practise morality teach it to another? How can a sinking man save another from drowning? The man who lives a moral life never raises the question as to how to serve the world, for he is never in doubt. Matthew Arnold says of a friend:

I saw him sensitive in frame,
I knew his spirits low,
And wished him health, success, and fame—
I do not wish it now.
For these are all their own reward,
And leave no good behind:
They try us—oftenest make us hard,
Less modest, pure, and kind.

Time was when Arnold wished his friend health, success and fame. But he did not so wish now, because his friend's happiness or misery did not depend on their presence or absence; he therefore only wished that his morality might ever endure. Emerson says, "Adversity is the prosperity of the great." Both the money and the fame belonging to the base are a misery to them and to the world.[1]

[1] Here follows an Urdu poem by Nazir in Gujarati transliteration.

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